

I Christopher Young testify to the content of this exhibit to be submitted into the record.

Chicago Tribune

<http://clearchannelsucks.org/modules.php?op=modload&name=News&file=article&sid=45&mode=thread&order=0&thold=0>

Media giant's rally sponsorship raises questions

By Tim Jones

Chicago Tribune national correspondent

March 19, 2003

Some of the biggest rallies this month have endorsed President Bush's strategy against Saddam Hussein, and the common thread linking most of them is Clear Channel Worldwide Inc., the nation's largest owner of radio stations.

In a move that has raised eyebrows in some legal and journalistic circles, Clear Channel radio stations in Atlanta, Cleveland, San Antonio, Cincinnati and other cities have sponsored rallies attended by up to 20,000 people. The events have served as a loud rebuttal to the more numerous but generally smaller anti-war rallies.

The sponsorship of large rallies by Clear Channel stations is unique among major media companies, which have confined their activities in the war debate to reporting and occasionally commenting on the news. The San Antonio-based broadcaster owns more than 1,200 stations in 50 states and the District of Columbia.

While labor unions and special interest groups have organized and hosted rallies for decades, the involvement of a big publicly regulated broadcasting company breaks new ground in public demonstrations.

"I think this is pretty extraordinary," said former Federal Communications Commissioner Glen Robinson, who teaches law at the University of Virginia. "I can't say that this violates any of a broadcaster's obligations, but it sounds like borderline manufacturing of the news."

A spokeswoman for Clear Channel said the rallies, called "Rally for America," are the idea of Glenn Beck, a Philadelphia talk show host whose program is syndicated by Premier Radio Networks, a Clear Channel subsidiary.

'Just patriotic rallies'

A weekend rally in Atlanta drew an estimated 20,000 people, with some carrying signs reading "God Bless the USA" and other signs condemning France and the group Dixie Chicks, one of whose members recently criticized President Bush.

"They're not intended to be pro-military. It's more of a thank you to the troops. They're just patriotic rallies," said Clear Channel spokeswoman Lisa Dollinger.

Rallies sponsored by Clear Channel radio stations are scheduled for this weekend in Sacramento, Charleston, S.C., and Richmond, Va. Although Clear Channel promoted two of the recent rallies on its corporate Web site, Dollinger said there is no corporate directive that stations organize rallies.

"Any rallies that our stations have been a part of have been of their own initiative and in response to the expressed desires of their listeners and communities," Dollinger said.

Clear Channel is by far the largest owner of radio stations in the nation. The company owned only 43 in 1995, but when Congress removed many of the ownership limits in 1996, Clear Channel was quickly on the highway to radio dominance. The company owns and operates 1,233 radio stations (including six in Chicago) and claims 100 million listeners. Clear Channel generated about 20 percent of the radio industry's \$16 billion in 2001 revenues.

Size sparks criticism

The media giant's size also has generated criticism. Some recording artists have charged that Clear Channel's dominance in radio and concert promotions is hurting the recording industry. Congress is investigating the effects of radio consolidation. And the FCC is considering ownership rule changes, among them changes that could allow Clear Channel to expand its reach.

Sen. Russell Feingold (D-Wis.) has introduced a bill that could halt further deregulation in the radio industry and limit each company's audience share and percent of advertising dollars. These measures could limit Clear Channel's meteoric growth and hinder its future profitability.

Jane Kirtley, a professor of media ethics and law at the University of Minnesota, said the company's support of the Bush administration's policy toward Iraq makes it "hard to escape the concern that this may in part be motivated by issues that Clear Channel has before the FCC and Congress."

Dollinger denied there is a connection between the rallies and the company's pending regulatory matters.

Rick Morris, an associate professor of communications at Northwestern University, said these actions by Clear Channel stations are a logical extension of changes in the radio industry over the last 20 years, including the blurring of lines between journalism and entertainment.

From a business perspective, Morris said, the rallies are a natural fit for many stations, especially talk-radio stations where hosts usually espouse politically conservative views.

"Nobody should be surprised by this," Morris said.

In 1987 the FCC repealed the Fairness Doctrine, which required broadcasters to cover controversial issues in their community and to do so by offering balancing views. With that obligation gone, Morris said, "radio can behave more like newspapers, with opinion pages and editorials."

"They've just begun stretching their legs, being more politically active," Morris said.

Copyright © 2003, Chicago Tribune